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ISRAEL'S POSITION ON THE ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM

-- ISRAEL HAS MADE CLEAR ITS STRONG OPPOSITION TO ANY MILITARY SALES TO ANY ARAB STATE. ISRAEL IS ESPECIALLY CONCERNED ABOUT THE SALE OF CONFORMAL FUEL TANKS, AIM-9L AIR TO AIR MISSILES, AND BOMB RACKS FOR SAUDI F-15S, AS WELL AS AERIAL REFUELING TANKERS AND AIRBORNE SURVEILLANCE SYSTEMS, TO SAUDI ARABIA. IT PERCEIVES THESE ITEMS AS SUFFICIENTLY ENHANCING THE CAPABILITY AND RANGE OF THE F-15 TO ENABLE IT TO POSE A THREAT TO ISRAEL.

-- ISRAEL HAS HAD CONSIDERABLE EXPERIENCE WITH THE F-15, AND RECOGNIZES IT TO BE A SUPERIOR AIRCRAFT. THEY BELIEVE THAT, SHOULD THE SAUDIS DECIDE TO USE F-15S IN A BOMBING ROLE AGAINST ISRAEL, THE CHANCES ARE VERY GOOD THAT SOME F-15S WOULD GET THROUGH THEIR DEFENSE SYSTEM. THEY ARGUE THAT EVEN WITHOUT CONFORMAL TANKS SAUDI F-15S BASED AT TABUK COULD BOMB ANY POINT IN ISRAEL. WITH CONFORMAL TANKS SAUDI F-15S OPERATING OUT OF TAIF COULD STRIKE SOUTHERN ISRAEL.

-- THE ISRAELIS ALSO ARGUE THAT WITH THE ENHANCEMENT ITEMS, SAUDI F-15S COULD FLY A FLIGHT PROFILE THAT WOULD HAVE A HIGHER PROBABILITY OF PENETRATING ISRAELI AIR DEFENSES AND/OR PERMIT SAUDI F-15S TO CARRY A BIGGER BOMB LOAD FOR A GIVEN TARGET COVERAGE.

-- BECAUSE OF THIS INCREASED THREAT, ISRAELIS ARGUE, THEY WILL HAVE NO ALTERNATIVE BUT TO INCREASE THEIR AIR DEFENSE CAPABILITY IN THE SOUTHERN PART OF ISRAEL. AT THE

SAME TIME, THE AIR THREAT IS UNCHANGED ELSEWHERE ON ISRAEL'S BORDERS. THUS, THE TOTAL ISRAELI AIR DEFENSE CAPABILITY WILL HAVE TO BE EXPANDED; A SHIFT IN UNITS WILL NOT SUFFICE.

-- THERE ARE SUBSTANTIAL REASONS FOR SAUDI ARABIA TO AVOID PARTICIPATION IN A CONFLICT WITH ISRAEL EVEN WITH THE ADDITIONAL EQUIPMENT FOR THE F-15S IN THEIR POSSESSION. ISRAEL HAS A HIGHLY EFFECTIVE AIR DEFENSE SYSTEM. MOREOVER, THE ISRAELI AIR FORCE COULD STRIKE BACK INTO SAUDI ARABIA. SAUDI ARABIA WOULD NOT WANT TO RISK THE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE U.S. WHILE WE RECOGNIZE THESE SYSTEMS PROVIDE SAUDI ARABIA WITH ADDITIONAL CAPABILITY, WE RATE THE RISK OF THEIR USE AGAINST ISRAEL AS LOW.